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The Bush Cuddle

Most of the mainstream press is colluding with the Bush White House in news management as egregious as anything we saw in the Reagan years. Take the scam pulled by the Knight Ridder news chain in the run-up to George Bush's speech to a joint session of Congress on February 27. On Feb 26 Knight Ridder, which publishes the Miami Herald, put out a story by one of the chain's writers, Amy Driscoll, to the effect that if Florida's Secretary of State, Katherine Harris, "had let south Florida's counties complete manual recounts before certifying the results of November's election George W. Bush likely would have won the presidency outright."

This story duly allowed newspapers across the country running the Knight Ridder story to put up headlines such as the main front page banner used by the Bay Area's West County Times: "Recount: Bush still would win". Very convenient for the White House. The new occupant of the Oval Office , living refutation of Chomsky's view that linguistic skills are deeply imprinted in the neuro-cerebral program of every human, could go before Congress to make his case for giving money to the rich and to the Pentagon, as a bona fide, democratically elected president.

But the next few paragraphs of Driscoll's story made it clear that Knight Ridder was playing a disingenuous game. The claim that Bush would have won Florida was reached by focusing narrowly on Miami-Dade and three other counties where Gore had asked for manual recounts. It ignored counts taken by other newspapers of other Florida counties, noted in recent editions of CounterPunch, which showed that votes for Gore were consistently undercounted. And of course the Knight Ridder story also ignored the damning accounts of how blacks and Haitians were frightened or bullied out of voting, and how a private company hired by Jeb Bush's state government had struck many black voters off the rolls on the grounds that they had criminal records. Time and again this turned out not to be true.

The fundamental mission of the press is to endorse the essential legitimacy of the American political system. In the current phase, an incoherent and visibly underqualified claimant to the presidency is being fulsomely endorsed as a cleansing force after the squalor of the Clinton years.

Of course the Clinton years were squalid. CounterPunch has described them in detail. Many of the pardons were squalid, as they have often been in American history. You think this is new? You think Denise Rich, Beth Dozoretz and Hugh Rodham have no antecedents in American political history? Just to take the immediate aftermath of the Civil War people known as "Pardon Brokers" swarmed across Washington.

One of the most notorious was Mrs L.L. Cobb, a handsome woman who boasted to friends of the ease with which she could reach President Andrew Johnson. General LaFayette Baker, head of the National Protective Police (the US Secret Service), spends no less than 100 pages in his memoir "Secret Service" to a description of how he set up a sting operation in which Mrs Cobb secured a pardon from Johnson for a fee of $300. Despite Baker's warnings, Johnson delighted in the visits of Mrs Cobb, even (**Diary** continued on page 2)

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Our Little Secrets

as Clinton delighted in the importunings of Mrs Rich who visited his White House no less than 100 times. Finally Baker set a detective at the main entrance to the White House to keep La Cobb out, but she got to Johnson anyway, through the kitchen. Cobb also bested Baker in court, successfully hitting him with a false arrest charge.

Hammer Buys a Pardon

We don't expect the pundits to remember Mrs Cobb and the other "pardon brokeresses" of the nineteenth century, but we do think they should have spent some time on the acts of mercy dispensed by President G.H.W. Bush.

Republicans squawk delightedly about the Rich pardon and about the vindication of their charge that Clinton is morally beyond the pale, the worst of the worst. Who do they think they're kidding? Corruption of the presidential power to pardon? Forget Nixon's pardon of Jimmy Hoffa in return for endorsement by the Teamsters' of his candidacy. Let's just take another look at those pardons issued by Bush Sr at the onset and conclusion of his presidential term.

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In 1989 president Bush used his power to pardon a longtime Soviet spy who had been prudent enough to offer $1.3 million to Ronald Reagan's presidential library, plus a further $110,000 disbursement to the Republican National Committee, this latter bribe being made in the week of Bush's inauguration. The pardon duly came a few months later, on August 14, 1989.

The spy was Armand Hammer whose ultimately successful maneuvers for his pardon are described in Edward Jay Epstein's brilliant 1996 book on Hammer, "Dossier." Epstein narrates how Hammer had bizarrely hoped he would be in line for a Nobel Peace prize for his efforts to foster US-Soviet understanding. To this end he lobbied both Prince Charles and the then Israeli prime minister, Menachem Begin, who duly nominated him for the Peace prize. But Hammer discovered that no one with a criminal conviction had ever won the Nobel award. On his record there was the embarrassment (a trifling one given his amazing career as a spy and oil bandit, eliciting no less than six federal investigations dating back to 1938) of federal misdemeamor convictions in 1976 for funnelling cash to Nixon's White House, aimed to buy the silence of the Watergate burglars in the early 1970s. So he needed a pardon.

Hammer made his $1.3 million pledge to the Reagan library and began to agitate for the pardon. The FBI alerted the Reagan White House to ongoing investigations of Hammer for attempting to bribe members of the Los Angeles City Council to the tune of $120,000 to give a green light to Hammer's company, Occidental, to drill off the California coast. Nonetheless it seemed that the pardon would come through in Reagan's parting hours. Then a hitch arose. Hammer had asked Reagan for a pardon based on innocence. As he had pleaded guilty to the misdemeanors (in returned for a lowering of the indictment from felony charges on grounds of obstruction of justice) even the compliant Reagan White House couldn't oblige.

Hammer shifted gears, secured an invitation to the Bush inaugural of 1989 and greeted the incoming president with the request for a pardon based on compassion, simultaneously handing over $110,000 to the Republican National Committee. (Ever the businessman, Hammer felt that since Reagan hadn't come through, he had no obligation to pony up the $1.3 million he'd promised to the library which later unsuccessfully sued Hammer's estate for the money.) He got his pardon the following August, though alas not his Peace Prize which in 1989 went to the Dalai Lama. In Epstein's book there is a picture of Armand Hammer and his mistress Rosemary Durazo in the company of the new president and his wife, Barbara.

Those Bush Iran-Contra Pardons

Now let's go to the other end of Bush time. As he left town, Bush pardoned, among others, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, former assistant secretary of state Elliott Abrams, former National Security Council Director Robert McFarlane, and three former CIA men, Duane "Dewey" Clarridge, Alan Fiers and Claire George. Abrams, Fiers, George and McFarlane had all been convicted of withholding information from Congress in connection with investigation of the Iran-contra scandal. Clarridge was facing trial. Weinberger had been indicted by special prosecutor Lawrence Walsh on the eve of the 1992 election.

At the time of the pardons, Walsh said bitterly "It demonstrates that powerful people with powerful allies can commit serious crimes in high office – deliberately abusing the public trust – without consequence." But there was more to this pardon than just getting some former criminal associates off the hook. Walsh said that new evidence had come to light in the form of notes taken by Weinberger, suggesting that as vice president Bush had been in the loop on the Iran-contra deals. Said Walsh, "In light of President Bush's own misconduct, we are gravely concerned by his decision to pardon others who lied to Congress and obstructed official investigations."

In other words, Walsh was suggesting that outgoing president Bush had pardoned Weinberger to ensure the silence of a man who could testify about his own criminal complicity in the Iran contra scandal.

These days Republicans are shout-

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Outgoing President Bush pardoned Weinberger to ensure the silence of a man who could testify about his own crimes.

ing that it's unprecedented to pardon a man who has not faced trial, as was the case with Marc Rich. Walsh made the same point in 1993. Ford pardoned Nixon before the latter was indicted; and Bush pardoned Weinberger and Clarridge, post indictment but before trial.

One final point. Clinton is savagely denounced for using military adventures to distract attention from his own predicaments. Look at the timing of Bush's sudden decision to commit US forces to Somalia. The concern with Somalia was always somewhat bizarre, but it sure did take those Bush pardons out of the headlines.

And now? Well, all this fuss about Clinton's pardon of Rich sure distracts attention from the mountain of evidence that George W. Bush is the beneficiary of a fixed election. Which offense is greater: pardoning Marc Rich, or stealing the White House?

DUPES' LAMENT: "WE WUZ DUPED"

There's nothing more distasteful than listening to a bunch of dupes suddenly announcing eight years after the evidence was in that they'd been duped.

The vultures are picking his bones: Salon, James Carville, Barney Frank, Bob Herbert, Lanny Davis… they've all finally thrown Bill over the side. In the Wall Street Journal Hamilton Jordan stigmatized Bill and Hillary as "the First Grifters", the term used for scam artists preying on the poor and the desperate in the Depression of the 1930s.

"The Clintons," Jordan sneered, "are not a couple, but a business partnership, not based on love or even greed but on shared ambitions. Everywhere they go, they leave a trail of disappointed, disillusioned friends and staff members to clean up after them." Against the Augean filth of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in Clinton time, Jordan contrasted the elevated moral tone of the Carter White House.

If he, Jordan, had recommended something like the Rich pardon, "Carter would have thrown me out of the Oval Office and probably fired me on the spot." As for Clinton's hubris after Lewinsky-gate, "if a president can get caught having sex in the Oval Office with an intern and committing perjury about it to a federal grand jury, and still get away with it, what could possibly stop him?"

Yes, this is the same Hamilton Jordan who is now happy to flail Clinton on the Wall Street Journal's editorial page, a page which mercilessly abused him and his boss through the Carter years. And yes, this is the same Hamilton Jordan who did his bit for high moral tone in Carter time by leering across a the table during a formal White House dinner at the wife of the Egyptian ambassador and making a lewd crack about the pyramids. Jordan further enhanced the White House's reputation by being accused of snorting coke at Studio 54.

And yes, this was the Carter White House which opened its doors to Henry Kissinger, who lobbied successfully for what could be fairly construed as a US government pardon for the Shah of Iran, allowing the deposed dictator sanctuary in the United States, thus directly prompting the takeover of the US embassy in Teheran.

As for liberal Democrats like the folks at Salon, why now? Salon stuck with Clinton through thick and thin, never conceding the jaunty corruption that has been Bill's preeminent characteristic since the day he entered the gubernatorial mansion in Little Rock, but insisting all the while on his honesty and innocence on all charges. At the conclusion of her mournful parting of the ways with Bill, Salon's Joan Walsh wrote, "If Clinton really abused the power of the presidency – and the power to pardon may be the most sacred, in a way, beyond the bounds of any other branch of government to reverse or rectify – as part of any kind of quid pro quo, political, financial, or social, he will have done what his enemies never could do: tarnish his legacy irrevocably, ensuring that when the moral accounting is complete, he is judged a failed president."

Failed because he pardoned Marc Rich? In other words, Salon could take the welfare bill, the effective death penalty act, the telecommunications reform bill, Waco, the war on drugs, the doubling of the prison population, the sale of the Lincoln bedroom as testimonies to a successful presidency. But then Clinton spoiled everything by issuing a pardon urged on him by people normally held in the highest respect by liberal Democrats, among them Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak, Shimon Peres, Abe Foxman of the ADL and Elie Wiesel (if you believe the email traffic flowing through Jack Quinn's office and no doubt on his billing receipts, though not Elie Wiesel if you believe Wiesel's recent insistence to the New York Times that he had compassion in his heart for only one spy for Israel at a time.)

Yes, they're kicking Bill over the side. Here's Bob Herbert of the New York Times, another longtime defender: "You can't lead a nation if you are ashamed of the leader of your party. The Clintons are a terminally unethical and vulgar couple, and they've betrayed everyone who has ever believed in them. As neither Clinton has the grace to retire from the scene, the Democrats have no choice but to turn their backs on them."

Yes, this is the Bob Herbert who only four months ago managed to avert his gaze from the mountain of evidence about the ethics and vulgarity of the Clintons, and who lashed Ralph Nader for presuming to raise the standard of honesty and dignity in government. Bill has a legitimate gripe. Why now? The evidence in 1992 about the character of the Clintons and the likely contours of a Clinton government was in. Sure, you could make a calculation, if you cared to, that even factoring in this evidence, the Real Bill and the Real Hillary were a better deal than a second term for George Bush. And you could say that tacky as Bill's affair with Monica was, it still offered no sound basis for impeachment. What you can't say is that you had no idea what the Clintons were like until he signed off on Marc Rich, or until HRC put in a good word for those Hasidic Jews.

When it comes to moral calibration, what's the bigger crime, for the entire liberal establishment to pardon Clinton and Al Gore for their welfare bill, or for Clinton to pardon a crooked commodities trader? CP

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Ted Turner's Golden Showers

Lord of the Land

With the possible exception of Bill Gates, no man in America is better known these days for his philanthropy than Ted Turner. Most famously, there's his billion dollar gift to the United Nations, in a program focussing on population and the environment, overseen by his pal Tim Wirth, the former senator from Colorado.

He's just launched a new campaign against nuclear weapons, to be headed by that old cold warrior and Pentagon shil Sam Nunn, to be funded to the tune of $50 million a year for five years. Even where the motivation might seem to be commercial, Turner promotes his initiatives in the language of altruism. He's touting his new 25 percent stake in the troubled Russian tv network NTV as an act of mercy.

Amid these world-mending ventures, Turner has found time to become this country's largest private landowner. Since 1987 Turner has bought up no less than 1.7 million acres, of which 1.1 million are in New Mexico, with the remainder in Montana, South Dakota, Nebraska, Colorado and Kansas. He's also bought four plantations in the South and two big ranches in Argentina.

These too are proclaimed by Turner and his publicists as selfless acquisitions in the public interest. Turner has said that he wants to return large portions of the West to the shape these lands were in the 1830s, when the white impact was still fairly minimal.

To give him some credit, Turner has instituted projects on his neo-feudal estates that have ecological merit. In Montana Turner is restoring west slope cutthroat trout. In Nebraska he's reintroducing the blowout penstemon, a prarie plant. He's bringing desert bighorn sheep to one of his ranches in New Mexico and most notably he has replaced cattle with the nation's largest buffalo herd. Nearly 30,000 of these hairy ungulates now browse on Turner's acres, not merely to restore the ecological balance, but also a commercial venture in low-fat, mad-cow-free meat.

But there's a less appetizing side to Turner's eco-projects and one which often displays this same fusion of philanthropy and commerce, a fusion which characterized tax-exempt foundations ever since the Rockefellers started winching their name out of the mud with well-advertised charitable exploits.

Turner is not a man who relishes insubordination and when it comes to wolves his standards are as exacting as with human employees. Last summer Turner offered space on his ranch in Montana as an "experience center" for Canadian wolves being reintroduced to Yellowstone.

As a matter of fact local wolves have always survived in Yellowstone, but the Interior Department has always preferred the fiction that they went extinct and have to be imported from Canada. These transplanted wolves don't enjoy the protection of the Endangered Species Act because they fall into the far less protected bureaucratic designation of "a non-essential, experimental population". This means that the wolves can be shot if they prey on local stock.

"Why don't you work hard like me, make $22 million and buy your own ranch?"

As an alternative to being shot they can be captured, as three of them were, and brought to Ted Turner's experience center where they have been put through a kind of Clockwork Orange aversion conditioning. The wolves are outfitted with electric collars and put into a half-acre pen with a cow. Any lupine lunge towards the cow brings its inevitable jolt, the idea being that eventually the wolves will get the message and leave the cow alone.

This grotesque parody of species preservation raises all sorts of interesting perspectives. Grizzlies might similarly be placed in a corral with tourists from New Jersey and given a healthy shock if they make any false move.

In the vast expanses of northern New Mexico, deer and elk hunting have a venerable tradition as a resource, a commons, for the poor Hispanic families in the region. In the name of eco-preservation Turner has now fenced his largest ranch and banned all unauthorized entry. Only the rich can enter, paying Turner $12,000 a week for elk-hunting. His New Mexico ranch manager, David Vackar, offers this rationale: "protecting the environment doesn't mean you have to lose money".

On his Montana spread Turner even banned hunting and fishing by his own employees, telling them "Why don't you go out and work hard like me, make $22 million and then buy your own ranch."

Turner has done some good through his environmental non-profit, the Turner Foundation, which has helped to bankroll some of the best and most creative grassroot green groups in the country. Grateful recipients used to ascribe these often unorthodox grants to the influence of Jane Fonda. Whether or not this was true, Fonda and Turner have now gone their separate ways and the Turner Foundation is abruptly changing course. The new head is Mike Finley.

Finley's a man with a 35-year career in government in tune with Turner's imperious attitude in adapting nature to his own interests.. He's run Everglades, Yosemite and most recently Yellowstone. While superintendant of Yosemite, Finley was at the eye of an infamous storm when private in-holders in the community of Foresta, off highway 120 inside the park, accused him of allowing a wild fire to rage out of control, and destroy their cabins. Finley's motive, they charged, was to force them to sell out to the park. Finley said that he was merely following the park service's "let burn" policy.

The following year Finley ordered a timber sale inside Yosemite in Hogdgon Meadow where enormous sugar pines were felled and sold, with the money from the sale used to partially fund the construction of park employee housing on the site.

From this exploit Finley went to Yellowstone where he brokered a secret contract in 1997 allowing the Diversa Corporation, a San Diego biotech firm, to mine Yellowstone's geysers and thermal pools for micro-organisms that the company could then clone in its labs. Montana greens accused Finley and the National Park Service of looting Yellowstone's biodiversity, with a scant return to the public exchequer. "Selling Manhattan for a handful of beads," was one bitter description.

Turner and Finley offer us an unappetizing parable of how the rich and their hired guns view nature and indeed public assets. The idea of conservation is not to train mountain lions to lie down with lambs or wolves with cows; nor is it an act of benevolence to enclose millions of acres of common land. It's a sad sign of a decline in the vitality of the public sphere when billionaires can rule the roost, proclaiming that they know best. CP

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Now, That's *Not* Jazz

BY JEFFREY ST CLAIR

Ken Burns's interminable documentary Jazz starts with a wrong premise and degenerates from there. Burns heralds jazz as the great American contribution to world music and sets it up as a kind of roadmap to racial relations across the 20th century. But surely that distinction belongs to the blues, the music born on the plantations of the Mississippi delta. Indeed, though Burns underplays this, jazz sprang from the blues. But so did R&B, rock-n-roll, funk and hip hop.

But Burns is a classicist, who is offended by the rawer sounds of the blues, its political dimension and inescapable class dynamic. Instead, Burns fixates on a particular kind of jazz music that appeals to his PBS sensibility: the swing era. It's a genre of jazz that enables Burns to throw around phrases such "Ellington is our Mozart." He sees jazz as art form in the most culturally elitist sense, as being a museum piece, beautiful but dead, to be savored like a stroll through a gallery of paintings by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

His film unspools for 19 hours over seven episodes: beginning in the brothels of New Orleans and ending with the career of saxophonist Dexter Gordon. But in the end it doesn't cover all that much ground. The film fixates on three figures: Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington and the young Miles Davis. There are sidetrips and footnotes to account for Sidney Bechet, Billie Holiday, Bix Beiderbecke, Count Basie, Charlie Parker, Thelonius Monk, and John Coltrane.

But the arc of his narrative is the rise and fall of jazz. For Burns, jazz reached its apogee with Armstrong and Ellington and its denouement with Davis' 1959 recording, Kind of Blue. For Burns and company it's been all downhill since then: he sees the avant guarde recordings of Coltrane, Ornette Coleman, and Cecil Taylor and the growth of the fusion movement as a form of artistic degeneracy. When asked to name his top ten jazz songs, Burns didn't include a single piece after 1958. His film packs in everything that's been produced since Kind of Blue (40 years worth of music) into a single griping episode. Even Kind of Blue—the most explicated jazz session in history—gets shoddy treatment from Burns in the film, who elides any mention of pianist Bill Evans, the man who gave the record its revolutionary modal sound.

This is typical of the Burns method. His films all construct a pantheon of heroes and antiheroes, little manufactured dramas of good and evil. Armstrong and Ellington are gods to be worshipped (despite their flirtations with Hollywood glitz), but Davis and Coltrane (both at root blues musicians to our ears) are fallen idols—Coltrane into the exquisite abstractions of Giant Steps and Love Supreme and Miles into the funk and fusion of Bitches Brew, On the Corner and his amazing A Tribute to Jack Johnson. Coleman, the sonic architect of the Free Jazz movement, is anathema.

It's easy to see why. Burns boasts that his American trilogy—the Civil War, Baseball and Jazz—is at bottom a history of racial relations. But it's not a history so much as a fantasy meant for the white suburban audiences who watch his movies. For Burns, it's a story of a seamless movement toward integration: from slavery to emancipation, segregation to integration, animus to harmony. For every black hero, there is a white counterpart: Frederick Douglas/Lincoln, Jackie Robinson/Branch Rickey, Louis Armstrong/Tommy Dorsey. In other words, a feel-good narrative of white patronage and understanding.

This, in part, explains why Burns recoils from the fact that Davis, Coltrane, Coleman and their descendents have taken jazz not toward soft, white-friendly swing sound but deeper into the urban black experience. When Davis went electric, it was as significant a move as Dylan coming out with a rock-and-roll band (and not just any band, but the Hawks) in 1966. Dylan was jeered by the critical elites as a "Judas"; and, despite the fact that Bitches Brew went on to be one of the best-selling jazz albums of all time, Davis is still being slammed. Burns includes a quote in his film denouncing Davis's excursions into fusion as a "denaturing" of jazz.

The Burns style—drilled into viewers over his previous films, the Civil War, Baseball and Frank Lloyd Wright—is irritating and as condescending as any Masterpiece Theatre production of a minor novel by Trollope: episodic, monotonous, edgeless. By now his technique is as predictable as the plot of an episode of "Friends": the zoom shot on a still photo, followed by a slow pan, a pull back, then a portentous pause—all the while a monotonous narration explains the obvious at length.

The series is narrated by a troika of neo-cons: Wynton Marsalis, the favorite trumpeter of the Lincoln Center patrons; writer Albert Murray, who chastized the militant elements of the civil rights and anti-war movements with his pal Ralph Ellison; and Stanley Crouch, the Ward Connerly of music critics. This trio plays

The series is largely narrated by a trio of neo-conservatives: Murray, Crouch and Marsalis, the favorite trumpeter of the patrons of Lincoln Center.

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the part that Shelby Foote did for Burns' previous epic, the Civil War—a sentimental, morbid and revisionist reverie on what Foote, an unrepentant Southern romanticist, wistfully fantasized as being the war between the states.

Instead of interviewing contemporary jazz musicians, Burns sought out Marsalis, a trumpeter who is stuck in the past. "When Marsalis was 19 he was a fine jazz trumpeter," says Pierre Sprey, president of Mapleshade Records, a jazz and blues label. "But he was getting his ass kicked every night in Art Tatum's band. I don't think he could keep up. And finally he retreated to safe waters. He's a good classical trumpeter and thus he sees jazz as being a classical music. He has no clue what's going on now."

Crouch brings similar baggage to the table. "Crouch started out as a modern jazz drummer", a veteran of the New York jazz scene tells CounterPunch. "But he wasn't very good. And finally he was booted from a lot of the avant guard sessions. He's had a vendetta ever since."

The excessive emphasis in the series on Louis Armstrong, often featuring very inferior work, no doubt stems from the fact that Gary Giddins, another consultant for the series, wrote a book on Armstrong.

Burns' parting shot is the story of Dexter Gordon, a tenor saxophonist whose life is more compelling than his playing. Typically Burns transforms Gordon's life into a morality play, a condensation of his entire film: born in L.A. Gordon mastered to the Parker/bebop method and when it passed him by, he battled depression and heroin addiction, fled to Copenhagen, and finally returned to the US in the late 1970s enjoying a brief renaissance in high priced jazz clubs in New York and DC, starred in Bernard Tavernier's tribute to bebop 'Round Midnight and died in 1990.

How different Burns' film would have been if, instead of Gordon, he had trained his camera on Sonny Rollins, who, like Coltrane, learned much from Gordon but ultimately surpassed him. Of course, Rollins is still alive and still making strikingly innovative music. His latest album, This Is What I Do, is one of his best. But this, of course, would have undermined the Burns/Marsalis/Crouch thesis that the avant guarde and Afro-centric strains, which began about the same time Gordon left the states, killed jazz.

After enduring Jazz in its entirety, there's only one conclusion to be reached: Burns doesn't really like music. In the 19 hours of film, he never lets one song play to completion, anywhere near completion. Yet there is a constant chatter riding on top of the music. It's annoying and instructive, as if Burns himself were both bored of the entire project and simultaneously hypnotized by the sound of his own words interpreting what he won't allow us to hear.

This may be the ultimate indictment of Burns' Jazz: the compulsion to verbalize what is essentially a nonverbal artform. It's also insulting; he assumes that the music itself if allowed to be heard and felt, wouldn't be able to move and educate those who (unlike Burns) are willing to open their ears and really listen. In a film supposedly about music, the music itself has been relegated to the background, as a distant soundtrack for trite observations on culture and neo-Spenglerian vaperings about the arc of American cap-H History. In that sense, Burns and his cohorts don't even demonstrate faith in the power of the swing-era music they offer up as the apex of jazz.

There are some great documentaries on popular music. Three very different ones come to mind: Bert Stern's beautiful Jazz on a Summer's Day, which integrates jazz, swing, avante guard, gospel and rock-n-roll all into one event, Robert Mugge's Deep Blues, a gorgeously shot and recorded road movie about the blues musicians of the Mississippi Delta, and Jean-Luc Godard's One+One, which documents the recording of the Rolling Stones Sympathy for the Devil. All are vibrant films that let the music and musicians do the talking. But Ken Burns learned nothing from any of them. Watching his Jazz is equivalent to listening to a coroner speak into a dictaphone as he dissects a corpse. CP

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Ted Turner in Wolf Shocker!

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